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ABSTRACT

The testimony of John C. Rainer, Director of the American Indian Scholarship Program, before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on the Interior and Related Affairs (May 1973) examined the Senate's reduction of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) appropriation for 1973-74. Rainer explained that the $19,938,000 requested for the year, $10,000,000 less than the 1972-73 appropriation, was inadequate to fund the projected 18,000 American Indian students entering college at that time. As support for his plea, Rainer cited Presidents Nixon and Johnson in their call for Indian self-determination. In line with this, 48 tribes are now granting scholarships to their young people, but can continue to do so only as long as adequate funds are available. Also, Rainer said that the 1972 Education Act was a laudable effort, but objected to Indians competing with all minority groups in the United States for the scholarship fund. He explained that the only legal basis for scholarship assistance to other minority groups was their U.S. citizenship; Indians, however, derived their legal position from a special relationship with the U.S. government established by treaties and land cession. Rainer concluded that the proposed BIA budget cut amounted to a halt in the Congressional effort to increase funding and training for many young Indians to be assets in their respective communities and in the Nation. (KM)

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AMERICAN INDIAN SCHOLARSHIPS, INC.
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TESTIMONY [of John C. Rainer]

Hearings before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
on the Interior and Related Affairs
May 11, 1973

My name is John C. Rainer, a Taos Pueblo Indian. I direct a program of American Indian Scholarships, Inc., based at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. This organization is a non-profit corporation governed by an All-Indian Board of Directors. It exists primarily to assist Indian graduate students who are working toward their Masters or PhD degrees. We serve Indian students nation-wide, irrespective as to whether they are reservation or non-reservation residents, so long as they are one-fourth or more Indian.

In reviewing the various treaties between the Indian tribes and the United States Government, and subsequent legislation, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. That the United States Government did promise education of Indians in order to induce the Indians to cede their lands.
2. That Congress took cognizance of these promises and has made an effort to implement the provisions of the treaties.

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3. That according to historical accounts, these promises have not been adequately fulfilled.
4. That providing funds for Indian education is a legal obligation of the United States Government.

At the higher educational level, Congress did not implement the treaty obligation until some 40 years ago, beginning in the 1930's. At first, funds were appropriated for a loan program, but Indian applicants fell short, and the funds were not fully utilized. During the 20 years, 1934 to 1954, students assisted through Bureau of Indian Affairs loans increased 2 1/2 times, from 71 to 186. In 1948, a grant program was added from which 78 students received grants. In the next ten years to 1958, student assistance rose nearly six times from 78 to 466. This experience developed several facts. The loan programs do not substantially aid Indians because families in the poverty level have low credit ratings, if any at all. The student involved had no real guarantee he could finish school, and even if he did, because of cultural, language and economic barriers and past experiences of discrimination, the Indian does not always have the self-confidence that he will be able to secure a steady, high-paying job in order to meet the financial obligation of his loan. Therefore, the financial aids programs of a loan nature raised more doubts in the minds of Indians than it solved problems for them on how to get an education. This, coupled with the long-standing belief of Indians that the government was to provide an

education in exchange for lands, proves that the grant program is the only practical solution for Indians to secure an education.

During these past 20 years, government emphasis on higher education for Indians has effectively pointed many students in this direction. Now, the results of those efforts are producing more and more Indian students applying for higher education grants. In the following ten years, from 1958 to 1968, student grants rose nearly six times to 2,669. This is a phenomenal increase in rate over the prior periods, when each ten year period is multiplied six times. From 1968 to 1973, the number of grants increased from 2,669 to 13,000, nearly five times in only five years. In 1971, there were 6,623 students awarded grants, and in 1972, there were 12,438, almost double in one year. Even at this rate, the percentage of high school graduates going on to college is far below the percentage of non-Indians.

GROWTH OF STUDENT AND FUND REQUIREMENTS

	Students Aided	Funds Used	Average Grant
1968	2,669	$ 2,248,000	$ 842.50
1969	3,189	3,000,000	940.75
1970	4,271	3,848,000	900.95
1971	6,623	6,098,000	920.75
1972	12,438	15,248,000	1,225.92
1973	13,000	20,956,000	1,612.00
		CURRENT REQUEST	
1974	13,500	19,956,000	1,478.25
		CURRENT INDIAN NEED	
1974	18,000	27,750,000	1,541.66

The Bureau of Indian Affairs' current scholarship request is reduced from $20,900,000 for the 1972-73 year to $19,938,000 for the 1973-74 year. We recognize the need to economize and eliminate waste; however, the prime beneficiaries of our Indian people are its youth. To drastically reduce the growth of our youth is to eliminate growth of the Indian people into the society of America. The experience we have in American Indian Scholarships, Inc., shows that the cost per year to attend college at the graduate level varies from $3,000 to $5,000 depending on the nature of training. To secure professionals, it will require not meager, but generous appropriations. From this, it is easy to see that even the funds requested at an average grant of $1,541 is wholly inadequate. You are respectfully urged not to reduce the funds at this point. You can understand from the figures on our chart, the need we have determined by projecting our growth in Indian students entering college is at least 18,000 in the 1973-74 fiscal year, and with the average grant being applied, the need will be in excess of $27,000,000 compared to $19,938,000 that the Bureau of Indian Affairs is asked to request in the name of economy. Furthermore, to allow the Bureau to request a lesser amount will actually be denying the Indian youth of American a decent chance for a decent education. How else except through adequate education can the Indian learn to find his rightful place in this extremely complicated society?

Today, in our American Indian Scholarships, Inc. organization, we see the Indian's efforts to become professionals, whether

it is to be a lawyer, doctor, dentist, PhD, or a professional in the fields of education, accounting or business.

Insofar as Congress and the Bureau of Indian Affairs are concerned, help for the Indian students in higher education has been limited to the undergraduate level.

Today we hear much about the concept of "self-determination". We Indians interpret this to mean that the Indian tribe, Indian group and Indian individual can determine what best suits the tribe, group or individual. This self-determination was first officially announced by former President L. B. Johnson, who declared in his Message to Congress on March 6, 1968, "Our goal must be: Freedom of Choice; an opportunity (for Indians) to remain in their homeland, if they choose without surrendering their dignity; an opportunity to move to towns and cities of America, if they choose, equipped with the skills to live in equality and dignity."

And much more recently, President Nixon in his Message to Congress on July 8, 1970, stressed the theme of self-determination. He stated, "We have turned from the question of whether the federal government has a responsibility to Indians, to the question of how that responsibility can best be fulfilled. We have concluded that the Indian will get better programs, and public monies will be more effectively expended if the people who are most affected by these programs are responsible for operating them."

Today, a number of Indian tribes, Indian groups and individual Indians are implementing this theme of self-determination.

The All Indian Pueblo Council of New Mexico has contracted with the Bureau of Indian Affairs to administer the Johnson O'Malley funds. Through contract it is also administering undergraduate scholarship funds for the 19 pueblos. Other tribes are doing similar organizing and contracting. Non-profit corporations such as American Indian Scholarships, Inc. have been formed by individual Indians to assist Indian graduate students. Indians in the field of medicine have formed an Association of American Indian Physicians in order to assist other Indians pursuing studies in medicine, as well as other related fields. No matter how limited, in recognition of acutely needed professionally trained Indians, 48 Indian tribes are now granting scholarships to their young people.

The Education Act of 1972 is laudable. However, we have not seen the well-intended results, and there are some points in the Act that the Indians do not agree with. They object to being lumped with the so-called minority group and having to share the 5% fund specifically set aside for the minorities. The only legal basis for scholarship assistance to other members of minorities is by virtue of their being citizens of the United States. On the other hand, the Indians legal basis for this right derives from a special relationship with the United States Government, through treaties and ceding of lands. An overwhelming majority of Indians prefer a special source be set up to assist Indians in higher education.

Also, the Act is restrictive in self-determination. The United States Office of Education and the Bureau of Indian Affairs have initiated a special funding of prestigious schools, on their own terms, throughout the country, where Indians wanting Masters and PhD work feel obligated to attend. These schools are far too expensive. The help of the United States Office of Education and the Bureau of Indian Affairs block grants are being used for administrative costs, including tuition, fees and supplies, as well as special programs, before it fulfills the living cost needs of the Indian students. In some cases, the per-student cost is as high as and over $13,000! American Indian Scholarships, Inc. has even supplemented some of these institutionalized funded students because there was not enough money left after administrative costs!

In addition to being so expensive, these institutions are too far removed from the reservations. Indian students prefer attending local universities and colleges not far removed from the reservation activities, their families, relatives and friends.

Indians prefer to be individually funded and choose the university or college they wish to attend, much like the GI system.

Funding large institutions with block grants rather than on an individual basis is a strange anomally. At a time when the Bureau of Indian Affairs is ordered to economize, it is still expected to fulfill the government obligation to educate the Indian. This agency is striving to serve as many students as it can with the inadequate funding, and yet, the block grant funding

still exists for the prestigious large schools. If the Indian student is not accorded his freedom to choose his own school and is inadequately funded, this distorts the concept of former President Johnson's and President Nixon's laudable, expressed concept of self-determination.

The proposed 1973-74 Bureau of Indian Affairs budget being less than the 1972-73 year amounts to a halt to the congressional effort to increase funding and training for many young Indian citizens to be assets in their respective communities and nation. Recently, due to bad publicity and disruptive incidents, some citizens have become wary of their government and less willing to deal with the government. I have every faith that you will increase the budget and fulfill this nation's treaty obligations with honor and justice.